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WHERE HAVE ALL THE MEN GONE?

Cheryl Lacey



ABSTRACT

Many men of age and wisdom are labelled pale, male and stale. Simply because they're female, women angrily demand the right to replace these men and bully them into silence. Schools promote political agendas and blame men for having to and failing to act. Teenagers mock history and attack men for the existence of Western nations, and for their failure to give them everything for nothing. Men understand humility, sacrifice, faith, loyalty, optimism, discipline and generosity. They aren't afraid of responsibility. They also know that teacher is merely a job title and that real teaching requires, and is, so much more responsibility. The world needs wise men.

Keywords: boys, education, family, men, school

'F* THE WORLD. I'M THE MOST IMPORTANT'**

That was the printed message on a hoodie worn by a sloth of a teenager – aged about 15 – who was slouching in a government benefits office. He was either the Grand Master of the 'Me Me Me' movement, or a devout follower.

A highly regarded gentleman in his early 80s, with life experience and a CV most would only dream of, stood leaning against his walking frame, reading the message. He called the teenager over and told him that what was written on the hoodie was most inappropriate.

'You wouldn't speak to your mother like that, would you?' he asked.

'She talks to me like that', the teenager replied.

The gentleman had a quiet but firm word to the teenager and then watched as he walked away and stood against the wall to prevent anyone else reading his hoodie. Apparently, he had learned a lesson.

This gentleman, like many of his age and wisdom, are labelled pale, male and stale. There's nothing they haven't been attacked about. Simply because they're female, women angrily demand the right to replace these men, yet bully them into silence for fear of being accused of harassment. Schools promote political agendas and blame them for having to and failing to act. Teenagers mock history and attack them for the existence of Western nations, and for their failure to give them everything for nothing. Men like this gentleman are few and far between. You could say they're from the *old school*. They understand responsibility, community, dignity, sacrifice and compassion. They've endured a life we cannot begin to imagine, even if they've come out well off on the other side.

The sloth in the government benefits office will never be the same again. He was given a lifeline and an education on beliefs and behaviour – not by an angry woman, or an irresponsible school, or a selfish uneducated teenager, but by a stranger who cared.

The world needs men. The world needs to value men. We can't lose them. Yet we are.

WHERE HAVE ALL THE MALE TEACHERS GONE?

It has been said that the very first public school began in 459BC. It was the “house of the book” or the “house of the teacher”, and it was established in Jerusalem by a Jewish scribe and priest, known as Ezra. The purpose of his school was to provide education for fatherless boys, aged sixteen and upward. The Jewish community continued to take the lead, and determined that all children, regardless of class, were entitled to an education. The result should have been the beginnings of an equal opportunity for all boys and men, regardless of circumstance.

What we now have in elementary or primary schools is a world, literally, where on average just 10% of elementary teachers are male. Statistics for men in secondary schools and further education aren't as easy to quantify. Scanning OECD reports, figures indicate just 40% of teachers in secondary schools in OECD countries are male.

Where have all the male teachers gone?

WHERE HAVE ALL THE FATHERS GONE?

A young boy becomes a man despite growing up with a father. Interventionists, the likes of Ezra in 459BC, are few. Consistency of their goodwill and intentions even more sparse. Globally nearly 8% (101.3 million) of all households are headed by a single parent. 84% are mothers (Baht, 2020).

Infants learn whom and what to trust and whom and what not to trust. Those young boys without a father figure at home learn issues of trust predominantly from their mother. The absence of a male figure at school consolidates a childhood weighted heavily toward the authority and influence of women.

Who, or what, is driving this trend? What is the philosophy or agenda behind it? What would be the consequences if this were to continue?

WHERE HAVE ALL THE FAMILIES GONE?

Family matters have become school matters. Decisions are made every day by school employees, under the guise of *duty of care* and *best interests of the child* – often alienating parents

from knowledge of, or contribution to, decisions made by the school, and more recently by the children themselves through a *mature minor* window.

In cases of complex family matters, particularly separation and divorce, where men are no longer welcome in the family home, the vast majority of teachers, predominantly female, make decisions about students without full parental input. A form of alienation against one parent occurs. The school system uses issues of *duty of care* as a defence coupled with the perceived right to being an authority on the education of the *whole child*, while continuing to apply methodologies from other disciplines in an ad hoc and potential damaging fashion to the boys and men.

Have schools become environments for reducing further, through daily decision making and inappropriate engagement in complex family matters, the value society places on men, fathers and boys?

WHERE HAS ALL THE HOPE GONE?

Of the more than 3100 who kill themselves in Australia every year - more than 2,300 (75%) - are male. This figure does not include single vehicle accidents, accidental drug overdoses or falls. Figures from the World Health Organisation, state that in 2019, 700,000 people died by suicide, with more than twice as many being males (World Health Organisation, 2021).

Adolescence (10-19 years of age) is a critical period for acquiring socio-emotional skills. Half mental health conditions appear before 14 years of age. What is the impact of a female dominated childhood at home and school on boys becoming men?

HONOURING MEN

When losing my father, all too suddenly, I wasn't ready to say good-bye. Not because of unspoken love – we said it often; I wasn't ready because I felt I hadn't learned all I could from him. Dad was a gentleman – in every sense of the word. He had an extraordinary mind, and he understood the world with intellect and wisdom gained from incredibly diverse life experiences. His own father was a WWI veteran – a deeply disturbed ANZAC, like so many other young men who went to war to protect the motherland. The fallout of this war had tremendous

ramifications for Dad, and then there was also WWII, with all its implications. Little wonder he chose a private way of being. Reflecting on his life, his struggles and the impact of his own father's life experience, eventually prepared me for saying good-bye. I realised I learned all I could from Dad in his lifetime, not mine. He gave me a remarkable life with him – and that's everything.

Men like my father are our greatest educators. They understand humility, sacrifice, faith, loyalty, optimism, discipline and generosity. They know the difference between knowledge, experience and application. They aren't afraid of responsibility. They also know that *teacher* is merely a job title and that real teaching requires, and is, so much more.

Next time you see your father, hug him and tell him you love him. If you don't talk, start now. And when you see an elder male, introduce yourself, ask him about his life – in particular his childhood and his family. Take the time to listen. Chances are you'll get an education. Our men aren't pale and they're certainly not stale; they're the last of God's Police and they won't be with us forever. Even more importantly, think about the sloth in the government benefits office, his family life and his schooling. Where will he be 60 years from now?

We need a new generation of God's Police. We need to raise them and educate them. We need boys to learn and celebrate the honour of becoming a man. May the legacy of our great elders live on and may our youth embrace the greatest role models that ever lived, before it's too late.

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AUTHOR PROFILE



Dame Cheryl Lacey, DSJ, is a mother and an accomplished and highly motivated educator. Since her first year of teaching in 1989, Cheryl began to unpack Australia's education system and has developed a First Principles framework to rebuild it. Her framework places families firmly in the centre of all decision making. She self-published her first book during her second year of teaching and secured a publishing contract in the USA and subsequently lived and worked in New York, advising educational leaders. Cheryl continues to write, speak, and advise on the relationship between family and school and the need for fundamental change.

The adoption of her two daughters led Cheryl on a path of community service, most notably in her 20-year membership of the Rotary Club of Melbourne. Cheryl is currently leading a team of dedicated members to reaffirm the purpose and founding principles of Rotary and secure a permanent home for the club.

Recognized as a Dame of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller Australasia, in 2021, Cheryl represented the Victorian Priory at the Sovereign Council in Malta in 2022. She has recently completed postgraduate studies in Parental Alienation, as part of the first group of professionals world-wide to complete such a course.

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